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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 008663

SIPDIS

NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT: PRELIMINARY RESULTS INDICATE FLAT NDP
PERFORMANCE, SIGNIFICANT MB GAINS

REF: A. CAIRO 8615

[B](#). CAIRO 8602

[C](#). CAIRO 8556 AND PREVIOUS

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Though official results are not yet out, much "unofficial" data on results of the first round of People's Assembly elections is in circulation as of late afternoon, November 16. The unofficial results show a flat performance by the ruling NDP, complemented by a relatively strong performance by "independent" NDP candidates. Nominally independent candidates affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood appear to have already doubled the MB's current representation in parliament, in only the first of three rounds of elections. Reform-minded contacts we reached this afternoon were dismayed by the results, which they argued underlined the weakness of the NDP's "reform camp" and the impotence of the secular opposition, paving the way for the rise of an "illiberal" Islamist trend. We recommend any public comment on the elections remain brief and factual. End summary.

[2](#). (SBU) As of late afternoon on November 16, we are still awaiting official announcement of results from the November 15 runoffs for People's Assembly seats in 62 constituencies in the provinces of Cairo, Giza, Manoufiya, Minya, Beni Suef, Assiyut, and Marsa Matrouh.

[3](#). (SBU) Justice Minister Aboul Leil, Chairman of the Parliamentary Elections Commission, was reportedly scheduled to have a press conference late on November 16, but the time has not yet been announced.

[4](#). (SBU) However, large amounts of data on election results, generally described as "semi-official" in independent and opposition media is circulating in Cairo. The picture we have put together, based on claims and reports from various sources indicates the following:

(Out of 164 seats at stake)

Official NDP Candidates	64
Independent NDP Candidates	62
Muslim Brotherhood Candidates	34
Wafd, Taggamu', misc.	6

(Note: We emphasize again that these figures are estimates, do not add up perfectly, and do not have official status. End note.)

[5](#). (C) Assuming the figures, or the general proportions, hold up in the official results, we note:

-- Official NDP candidates will have won about 41 percent of the vote, hardly better than the 38 percent it secured in 2000 - surely a disappointment to those who have been working to overhaul the party and its image since that time. Most observers expect, however, that as in 2000, most if not all of the "independent" candidates linked to the NDP will return to the party to join the majority bloc.

-- The MB will have more than doubled its presence in the People's Assembly (the MB held 16 seats in the outgoing Assembly) in only the first of three rounds.

-- Secular opposition parties Wafd and Taggamu' fared miserably, scoring only two seats each. Their participation in the seven party "National Front for Change" appeared to benefit them not at all. In the outgoing parliament, Wafd and Taggamu' had five and six seats each.

Key Winners and Losers

[6](#). (C) Among the prominent losers in yesterday's runoffs was Hossam Badrawi, a long-time protege of Gamal Mubarak, chairman of the education committee in the outgoing parliament, and a former leading member of the NDP's "reform camp."

-- A conspicuous victor is Mostafa Bakry, publisher of the

independent tabloid Al-Osboa. Through his editorials and his paper's "investigative pieces" covering "American Zionist conspiracies" to divide, conquer, and even wage genocide in the Muslim world, Bakry has long sought to distinguish himself as Egypt's leading anti-American demagogue.

-- Another conspicuous winner is Ragab Helal Hameida, the slippery Islamist kebab-vendor-cum-politician who joined Musa Musa's insurrection against Ayman Nour in the Ghad Party. Though Hameida was at least until recently a member of Musa Musa's breakaway "Ghad Party," he apparently ran as an independent.

Initial Reactions

17. (C) Ossama Al-Ghazali Harb, editor of the International Politics Journal at Al-Ahram Center, characterized the results so far as a "failure for the NDP's New Guard," referring principally to the absence of younger, reform-minded figures on the roster of official NDP candidates. According to Negad El-Borai, a civil society activist and lawyer, the loss by Hossam Badrawi to NDP-dissident Moustafa Hisham Khalil in Qasr Al-Nil district is "symbolic of internal NDP divides," and of the fact that the NDP Old Guard remains the party's only effective way to achieve electoral success.

18. (C) Hisham Kassem, publisher of Al-Masry Al-Youm, observed that the first round results suggest that "our strong ruling party is not so strong after all." Kassem said that NDP-independent Hisham Moustafa Khalil, who prevailed over NDPer Hossam Badrawi, had "bought his way to power, every step of the way."

19. (C) Asked to explain why the MB independents appear to have done so well, our contacts offered several points:

--The relative neutrality of the security services, compared to 1995 and 2000 when they arrested MB candidates and blocked prospective MB voters from the polls, created an atmosphere where MB campaigns stood a higher chance of success. The fact that the MB cadres are organized, motivated, and perceived as uncorrupt also contributed to their successes.

--Moreover, the MB took advantage of the increased transparency that has so far characterized the 2005 polls of voting to position their own "monitors" and other activists at the polls which made it impossible for them to be displaced without blatant fraud or intimidation.

--The "foolish" effort by some NDP candidates to rally voters using an appeal to Islam played into the MB's hands since the NDP's Islamist bona fides are suspect to many voters.

10. (C) Borai opined that the GOE now faces a problem largely of its own making: by putting "liberals" like Ayman Nour under "hard pressure" they had, again, left the Islamists as the most attractive force for Egyptians who are opposed to the ruling party. Instead of bona fide reformist liberals in the new Parliament, said Kassem, the leading players will be demagogues like Moustafa Bakry (publisher of scandal-sheet "Osboa") and Ragab Hillal Hameida, of the pseudo-Ghad party, widely reputed as a con-man, thought to have been supported by elements in the GOE who were looking to discredit Ayman Nour.

Comment

11. (C) This is an initial and preliminary reading of the first of three rounds of People's Assembly elections. It will be critical to see if the Parliamentary Elections Commission confirms the MB wins when it announces the official results. Despite the tremendous efforts of Gamal Mubarak, his circle of advisors and operatives, and even the President himself, to overhaul the NDP's image and present itself to voters as a newly reform-minded party with a vision for the future, the flat performance of the party's official candidates indicates that it has failed its first electoral test. End comment.

Suggested Press Guidance

12. (C) Given that results are not yet official, and given that we are only completing the first of three rounds of elections, we recommend any public comment on the process remain as concise and factual as possible, possibly along the following lines:

-- Early indications are that the ruling National Democratic

Party, and independents related to the NDP, have led the polling so far;

-- We also understand independent candidates tied to the Muslim Brotherhood are making a significant showing;

-- Security forces at the polls have generally conducted themselves professionally and impartially;

-- Domestic civil society groups, who were accredited to monitor the polls for the first time, have registered some concerns about the process and have reported their intention to file them with the Egyptian authorities;

-- This is just the first of three stages of elections. The next two phases are scheduled for November 20 and December 1, each with likely runoff stages.

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